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### Strategy and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean

BY DAVID H. POPPER

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# Strategy and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean

BY DAVID H. POPPER

*with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association*

BRITAIN'S supremacy in the Mediterranean is a product of British imperialism during the last century, which raised British dominance in the middle sea to its apex at the end of the World War.<sup>1</sup> Since the peace settlement of 1919, Britain's chief interest in this area has been the preservation of the status quo. Today, however, London is confronted by a new drive for hegemony resulting from the intensified imperialist tendencies of Fascist Italy. Mussolini, under the influence of the traditions of ancient Rome, is thought to have embarked on a bold policy looking toward supremacy throughout the Mediterranean and Red Sea basins. While before 1935 Italy's imperialist aspirations found their sharpest expression in altercations with France over naval and African colonial problems,<sup>2</sup> it was only natural that they should eventually clash with British interests. Fascist Italy will doubtless feel itself to some extent a prisoner of British policy as long as Britain controls Gibraltar and Suez, Italy's maritime links with the outside world, together with a vast expanse of colonial territory in which Italy believes it should share.

The resurgence of Germany under Hitler gave Mussolini a golden opportunity to strengthen his Mediterranean position. In an agreement with France concluded in January 1935 the Italian government succeeded in settling colonial issues with Paris, in return for assurance of Italian resistance against Nazi expansion through Austria. Since France thereby became dependent on Italian as-

sistance in Europe, Mussolini was able to discount the possibility of concerted Franco-British action, under the aegis of the League of Nations, to combat aggression in Africa. The Italian dictator chose this moment to challenge British imperial interests through the Ethiopian venture.<sup>3</sup>

Both Britain and the League failed in the Ethiopian crisis. Now Mussolini, acting with Hitler, is again threatening British imperial prestige by his part in the Spanish revolt. Whatever the outcome in Spain, it is clear that Britain and Italy have become the chief antagonists in the Mediterranean. This report considers the general strategic situation confronting Italy, Britain and France, and the manner in which that situation has been modified by recent diplomatic developments.

## THE CHALLENGE OF ITALY

Mussolini's imperialistic ambitions in the West became evident in 1926, during secret negotiations with the Spanish dictator, Primo de Rivera, for use of a base in the Balearics in time of war, followed by his successful challenge in 1928 for participation in the international administration of Tangier. These incidents were outweighed, however, by attempts to increase Fascist influence in the East. Rome, in control of the Adriatic through its predominance in Albania, gained formal title to Rhodes and the Dodecanese in 1923<sup>3a</sup> and, since its conquest of Ethiopia, enjoys an important position in East Africa. The Italian merchant marine is extremely active in the Eastern Mediterranean; Italy has pioneered in the establishment of civil air lines to Greece, Turkey and Egypt;

1. Cf. Pietro Silva, "Caratteri, aspetti, e fasi fondamentali nella politica mediterranea dell'Inghilterra," *Rassegna di politica internazionale* (Milan), January 1936, pp. 9-26; speech of Luigi Federzoni, president of the Italian senate, *Corriere della Sera* (Milan), January 5, 1936; Luigi Federzoni, "Hege-  
mony in the Mediterranean," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), April 1936, pp. 387ff.

2. Vera Micheles Dean, "France and Italy in the Mediterranean," *Foreign Policy Reports*, March 19, 1930; William T. Stone, "The Franco-Italian Naval Dispute," *ibid.*, June 24, 1931.

3. Arnold J. Toynbee and V. M. Boulter, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935 (London, Oxford, 1936), vol. 1, pp. 1, 2, 91-118; vol. 2, *passim*.

3a. Treaty of Peace, signed at Lausanne on July 24, 1923, League of Nations, *Treaty Series*, 1924, Vol. XXVIII, No. 701, p. 23. These islands had been in Italy's possession since the Turco-Italian war of 1911-1912.

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and commercial and cultural activity is fostered among the Arab populations of the area.<sup>4</sup>

Mussolini's Mediterranean policies have been supported by a program of military self-sufficiency for totalitarian war which, strengthened by resistance to League sanctions, has been carried to new lengths in response to Britain's rearmament program.<sup>5</sup> On the sea the drive for preparedness has taken the form of naval building threatening France's position. Here Italy is at a decided advantage since it confines itself to the construction of swift, light vessels of relatively short range, especially adapted for service in the Mediterranean, while British and French vessels must be designed for longer cruises and for combat under conditions of great diversity. Italy's geographic position gains in significance with the increasing potentialities of air warfare and the steady rise in the cruising radii of bombers. Italian planes can now reach all points on the Eastern Mediterranean littoral from their bases, and machines are being placed in service which can carry a bomb load from the mainland to either extremity of the middle sea.<sup>6</sup>

Italy's great strategic asset in a Mediterranean conflict is its ability to concentrate its main forces in a relatively small, centrally located area directly athwart the long line of British imperial communications. Its military power is organized in two north-south transversals cutting the maritime route between Gibraltar and Suez. The western barrier takes the shape of a long chain of naval and air bases, flanked by Sardinia and proceeding from Spezia southward along the Italian coast.<sup>7</sup> Anticipating a clash with Britain, Fascist military authorities have moved to strengthen the southern end of this strategic line, in an attempt to close the narrow waters of the Straits of Sicily to enemy traffic.<sup>8</sup> The Italian government apparently intends to mine the Straits and control traffic through the narrow open lanes by submarine and air activity from Sicily and the island of Pantelleria. This small island, whose potentialities had been disregarded before the Ethiopian crisis, has no natural

4. Cf. Santi Nava, "Il problema del Mediterraneo orientale," *Oriente Moderno* (Rome), February 1937, pp. 61-78.

5. Cf. text of decree of Fascist Grand Council, March 2, 1937, *Journal des Nations* (Paris), March 6, 1937.

6. Statements of General Valle, Under-Secretary of State for Air, March 24 and 28, 1936, *Corriere della Sera*, March 25, 29, 1936. Long-range bombing raids in the Western Mediterranean, however, are not yet practicable on an appreciable scale. *L'Afrique Française* (Paris), March 1937, p. 157.

7. *Ibid.*, November 1936, p. 801; *Il Popolo d'Italia* (Milan), October 11, 1936.

8. The distance between Cape Bon, Tunis, and the Sicilian coast is approximately 100 miles. Pantelleria is 55 miles from Sicily.

harbor and cannot be utilized as a large-scale base, but can be fitted out with little delay as a point of support for submarines and airplanes. Italian naval maneuvers simulating blockade operations in this area were conducted in March 1937 from the port of Tripoli; and in August 1937 more extensive exercises by land, sea and air forces centering on Sicily will further test the effectiveness of these tactics.<sup>9</sup>

The second north-south transversal stretches from the powerful aero-naval base of Leros, in the Dodecanese, to its mate at Tobruk in Libya. From this line Italy may command shipping forced to pass north or south of Crete as well as traffic emerging from the Dardanelles, while a certain amount of pressure may be applied against Turkey, the Levant littoral and the Egyptian coast. Land attacks may also be launched against Egypt from Libya—a maneuver facilitated by completion of a 1000-mile strategic highway from Tunis to the Egyptian border.<sup>10</sup> With the improvement in methods of motorized desert warfare, Libya's military potentiality is heightened by the possibility of using the southeastern oasis of El Owenat as one starting point for a pincers-like invasion of the Sudan from two directions.<sup>11</sup> The advancing Libyan forces would be met by Mussolini's Ethiopian army, enlarged by native troops, and carried to the Sudan border over newly constructed strategic roads.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Italians—utilizing the coastal strip of Somaliland and the island of Du-meirah acquired from France by the agreement of January 7, 1935—may eventually be able to dispute British control of the bottleneck at the southern end of the Red Sea.<sup>13</sup> They have already appropriated funds for development of the port of Assab, Eritrea, during the next four years.<sup>14</sup>

#### BASES OF BRITISH STRATEGY

It will thus be seen that the most direct Italian threat to British supremacy lies along the maritime route between the Central Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The interest of the British Commonwealth in this area, however, is more ex-

9. *Le Temps* (Paris), February 26, 27, March 6, 13, 1937.

10. *The Times* (London), March 11, 1937.

11. Margret Boveri, *Das Weltgeschehen am Mittelmeer* (Zürich; Atlantis, 1936), pp. 296-303.

12. Varanini Varo, "Il nuovo esercito coloniale Italiano," *Gerarchia* (Rome), October 1936, pp. 699-706; Antonio Palumbo, "La rete stradale imperiale," *ibid.*, July 1936, pp. 487-90.

13. Apparently sovereignty over this territory has not yet been transferred to Italy. *L'Europe Nouvelle* (Paris), April 17, 1937, p. 372; *L'Afrique Française*, March 1937, p. 153.

14. *The Times*, April 7, 12, 1937.

tensive than the mere preservation of the great seaway to the East, although the "vital importance" of this interest has long been a cardinal axiom of Britain's imperial defense policy.<sup>15</sup> Defense of territories over which control was acquired during the development of the Suez route, including Palestine, Egypt and Iraq, must also be regarded as a British concern of the highest order. Since the war, moreover, new means of transportation have supplemented the maritime highroad. The development of motor transport service through Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq has in effect created a land bridge to the Persian Gulf.<sup>16</sup> The area it traverses has become an important petroleum center since the opening of the Mosul and Kirkuk fields whose oil first reached the Mediterranean through two great pipelines completed in 1934.<sup>17</sup> In these territories and in Egypt are situated important airdromes for the rapidly expanding air services to South Africa and the East. Thus, whatever the fate of British shipping through the Suez Canal, Britain would still be constrained to preserve its position in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Before the war the route to the East was adequately secured by control of four key points in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea—Gibraltar, Malta, the Egyptian defenses and Aden. All have been re-enforced since the period of Anglo-Italian tension in August 1935.<sup>18</sup> Their efficiency, however, has unquestionably been diminished by the development of the aerial offensive. In the West the rock of Gibraltar is considered invulnerable to artillery or air attack because of its small area and powerful, tunneled defenses.<sup>19</sup> But to protect ships in the small harbor of Gibraltar an ever-widening zone surrounding the Straits must be kept in friendly or neutral hands.<sup>20</sup> Britain has made attempts in the past to secure the exchange of the rock for Ceuta in Spanish Morocco, with sur-

15. Great Britain, Imperial Conference, 1926, *Summary of Proceedings*, Cmd. 2768 (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1926), p. 30; Imperial Conference, 1923, *Summary of Proceedings*, Cmd. 1987 (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1923), pp. 16, 17.

16. Cf. Boveri, *Das Weltgeschehen am Mittelmeer*, cited, pp. 387ff.

17. One traverses the British sphere of influence, debouching at Haifa; the other passes through the French mandated territories and reaches the sea at Tripoli. The fields are controlled by British, Dutch, French and American interests. Oil shipments to the Mediterranean seaboard in 1936 totaled 3,894,446 tons. *Commerce Reports* (Washington, D. C.), March 13, 1937, p. 207.

18. Great Britain, *Statement Relating to Defence*, March 3, 1936, Cmd. 5107 (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1936), p. 5.

19. Statement of Sir Alexander Godley, former Governor of Gibraltar, quoted in Boveri, *Das Weltgeschehen am Mittelmeer*, cited, pp. 86, 87.

rounding territory suitable for a large air and supply base.

From Gibraltar it is 1000 sea miles to Malta, long used as the principal base for the British Mediterranean Fleet because of its well protected harbor. While Malta's value has been markedly reduced by its proximity to Sicilian air bases, the British Cabinet has repeatedly declared that it intends to maintain and even strengthen the island for naval and air purposes.<sup>21</sup> The base is being re-enforced, particularly by construction of new air fields, but the question remains whether Britain can successfully overcome such drawbacks as the necessity for importing much of the island's food supply and repressing pro-Italian sentiment among the natives.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of establishing a first-class British base in the Eastern Mediterranean—a need revealed in 1935—is enormously complicated by the impossibility of retreating beyond the range of Italian planes stationed in Libya and the Dodecanese. While both Haifa and Alexandria are useful as secondary depots, the former offers insufficient harbor facilities and is situated in mandated territory, and the latter is now a foreign port.<sup>22a</sup> The Admiralty has broadly hinted that it contemplates the development of Cyprus, situated 240 miles from the nearest Italian territory, which would form a protective shield for the Levant and the Suez Canal approaches.<sup>23</sup> The island will accommodate a larger force than the opposing Italian establishment at Leros; with Cyprus as a base, British ships and planes might succeed in cutting off the Dodecanese and even Libya.<sup>24</sup> Britain's control of the

20. For a history of British efforts to keep Morocco and Tangier from falling under the domination of a power which might erect counter-fortifications, cf. Graham H. Stuart, *The International City of Tangier* (Stanford University, Stanford University Press, 1931), Chapters 3, 4.

21. Statements of Sir Samuel Hoare and W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 313, June 17, 1936, p. 973; vol. 318, December 2, 1936, p. 1242.

22. Malta, autonomous in local affairs since 1921, reverted to the status of a crown colony on September 2, 1936 and is now governed directly from London. The government has taken steps to discourage use of the Italian language and is combating alleged Italian propaganda. The Italian Istituto de Cultura has been closed, and lecturers have been dismissed from the public University of Malta for "conduct prejudicial to British interests" there. *The Statesman's Year-Book*, 1936, p. 96; *The Times*, July 6, September 3, 1936; *New York Times*, February 11, 1937.

22a. For the time being British forces may continue to use Alexandria. Cf. p. 71.

23. Statement of Sir Samuel Hoare, speaking at Nicosia, Cyprus, September 5, 1936, *The Times*, September 7, 23, 1936.

24. B. H. Liddell Hart, "The Strategic Future of the Mediterranean," *Yale Review* (New Haven), winter 1937, pp. 231, 243.

Suez Canal and its re-enforcement of Aden and Perim may also lead to isolation of the Italian East African colonies. It is said that Greece has promised Britain the use of its harbors in the event of war.<sup>25</sup> This would facilitate British control at the Dardanelles.

British strategists, confronted by the interpenetration of Italian bases with their own at all points save Gibraltar, are sharply divided regarding the course to be pursued in the event of hostilities. The less conservative group is impressed by the difficulty of protecting ships from air and submarine attack in narrow seas.<sup>26</sup> It would establish a long-range blockade against Italy from Gibraltar in the West and from Aden and Kilindi (Kenya) in the East. British shipping would be routed around the Cape. Although this move would constitute a dangerous drain on shipping and supplies by lengthening the voyage to Australian ports by 10 per cent and that to India by almost 80 per cent, it is claimed that the Mediterranean sea lane cannot be kept open in any case. These experts advocate defense of British-controlled territories by small naval vessels, submarines and air squadrons designed to resist invasion and initiate sudden, harassing attacks. They urge that the expenditure now lavished on capital ships and costly bases vulnerable from the air be allocated instead to protection of the shores of Africa.<sup>27</sup>

This thesis is disputed by more orthodox authorities who minimize the effect of aerial bombing on protected ships and fleet stations and claim that the presence of a large navy prepared for offensive action is the strongest possible deterrent to a potential foe.<sup>28</sup> Only a full battle fleet, they argue, can defend British Mediterranean territories against an enemy. Even a partial withdrawal would lessen the efficacy of long-range blockade by leaving Egyptian cotton and Mosul oil in Italian hands, while British prestige in the Moslem world would suffer a shattering blow.<sup>29</sup> Some advocates

of a strong Mediterranean fleet would therefore attempt to keep the sea lane open to merchant vessels, but a more practicable alternative would be to maintain full offensive naval strength while routing shipping around the Cape.<sup>30</sup>

Although the British government shows no sign of abandoning its Mediterranean position in any particular, it is taking precautionary measures to prepare the South African route in case of emergency. A recent official investigation of the vulnerability of battleships to bombing attack—a crucial factor in the situation—although highly tentative in its conclusions, nevertheless stated that giving up the capital ship would for various reasons “lead to grave risk of disaster.”<sup>31</sup> The Admiralty’s opinion appears to be that, by increasing the offensive power and anti-aircraft defense of both warships and bases, these can be made such unattractive targets for bombing that an enemy would be disinclined to molest them. Over-age cruisers and destroyers would be used to convoy merchant shipping in the narrow seas if necessary. The “right strategy and tactics” for the British navy and air force, according to the First Lord of the Admiralty, are offensive rather than defensive and take into full account the vulnerability of opponents.<sup>32</sup> Thus Britain apparently relies on a precipitate attack by its coordinated sea and air forces to paralyze a Mediterranean opponent at the outset of a conflict.

#### THE INTERESTS OF FRANCE

As the third prominent factor in the Mediterranean France, like Britain, is vitally concerned in any change of the status quo affecting its imperial communications. French manpower, outnumbered more than 3 to 2 by Germany, must be supplemented in time of war by natives from colonial territories, chiefly Tunis, Algeria and Morocco. Under present conditions the security of the shortest route to North Africa may be rendered precarious by forces operating from the west coast of Italy.<sup>33</sup> Italian attack would be difficult if trans-

25. Ulrich Scheuner, “Die heutige Lage im Mittelmeer,” *Zeitschrift für Politik* (Berlin), January-February 1937, pp. 60ff.

26. During the World War a few German submarines, operating under severe handicaps, destroyed an enormous amount of Allied tonnage in the Mediterranean. It proved necessary to divert most of the Allied traffic to the East around the Cape. C. Ernest Fayle, *The War and the Shipping Industry* (London, Oxford, 1927), pp. 170, 171.

27. “The Middle Sea,” *The Round Table* (London), September 1936, pp. 724ff.

28. Cf. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, “The First Line of Defense,” *National Review* (London), January 1937, pp. 41-48; Vice-Admiral J. E. T. Harper, “The Naval Air Arm,” *ibid.*, February 1937, pp. 181-84.

29. Cf. “The Middle Sea,” cited; Corvette Captain Kenneth Edwards in *The Morning Post* (London), January 11, 20, 1937.

30. Cf. H. C. Bywater, “The Changing Balance of Forces in the Mediterranean,” *International Affairs* (London), May-June 1937, pp. 361-87.

31. Great Britain, *Report of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the Vulnerability of Capital Ships to Air Attack*, November 1936, Cmd. 5301 (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1936).

32. Sir Samuel Hoare, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 321, no. 73, March 11, 1937, pp. 1372-75.

33. France, Chambre des députés, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances chargée d'examiner le projet de loi portant fixation du budget général de l'exercice 1937 (Guerre, défense des territoires d'outre-mer, poudres)* (Paris, Imprimerie de la chambre des députés, 1936), pp. 41, 42.

ports hugged the Spanish coast or if overland transit via Gibraltar were provided, but arrangements of this type are impractical as long as Spain's political future remains uncertain. France has consequently developed an alternative Atlantic route which, although it entails an additional 600 sea miles of travel, would be almost invulnerable provided Spain remained neutral. A system of roads and a railroad have been constructed from Algeria and Tunis to Casablanca on the Moroccan coast, whence troops and supplies may be embarked for Atlantic ports.<sup>34</sup>

It is obvious that, if the Fascist powers secure a military foothold in the Balearic Islands, Spain or Northwest Africa, French communications would be threatened even more directly than those of Britain. The peculiar importance of the Western Mediterranean in French strategy is fully realized by the Blum government, a member of which has stated that if the Italian navy had been concentrated in the Western Mediterranean during the Spanish crisis, French vessels from the Atlantic fleet would have been brought to that area to re-establish the normal equilibrium of forces.<sup>35</sup>

The principal bases for protection of France's north-south communications are Toulon, on the southern shore of France, Bizerta in Tunis, and Dakar on the Senegal coast. From Bizerta and its powerful air base at Karouba, France may operate in the narrow waters separating Sicily from Africa.<sup>36</sup> Auxiliary naval establishments and coast defenses have also been constructed at Algiers, Tunis and other points on the North African littoral. Lack of a first-class base near the Western end of the Mediterranean, long one of the gravest defects in the French defensive scheme, will soon be overcome by the new aero-naval establishment at Mers-el-Kebir, near Oran.<sup>37</sup> For protection of the Atlantic route, defenses have been installed at Casablanca, while a seaplane base is planned at Kenitra, 90 miles to the north.<sup>38</sup> All naval air bases are being augmented in a program now scheduled for completion in 1940-1942.<sup>39</sup>

French interests parallel those of Britain in the Eastern as well as the Western Mediterranean.

34. Cf. René la Bruyère, "Les routes impériales françaises," *Revue des deux mondes* (Paris), September 15, 1936, pp. 286-304; *Le Temps*, February 5, 1937.

35. M. Gasnier-Duparc, French Minister of Marine, in the Senate, *Le Temps*, February 25, 1937.

36. General P. Azan, "L'Organisation militaire de la Tunisie," *L'Afrique Française*, April 1936, supplement no. 4; *Le Temps*, January 7, 9, 22, 1937.

37. *Ibid.*, January 6, 17, 1937; René la Bruyère, "Les routes impériales françaises," cited, p. 300.

38. *New York Times*, January 21, 1937.

They comprise not only freedom of communications with Madagascar and Indo-China, but French commitments in the Levant arising from France's historic prestige in the region, its air route to Asia and a desire to check the spread of German and Italian influence through Southeastern Europe.<sup>40</sup> At present France imports over 60 per cent of the oil produced in Iraq, an amount which meets almost half of its normal requirements. Despite recent progress in the use of substitutes, interruption of this supply would cause considerable dislocation in French economic life.<sup>41</sup> Experts have therefore suggested construction of a naval base at Tripoli, in the Lebanese Republic, to safeguard this vital import at its source.<sup>42</sup>

#### MEDITERRANEAN DIPLOMACY OF STATUS QUO POWERS

The Ethiopian crisis may be said to have opened a new phase in Mediterranean diplomacy—a brief period characterized by a movement toward close collaboration on the part of the status quo powers, with Britain, which was unprepared for war, in the forefront. British anxieties found expression in negotiations with France, resulting in a pledge of French assistance if Italy should resort to hostilities because of British action taken in collaboration with the League of Nations. Anglo-French staff conversations were held to implement this undertaking. Subsequently, Britain also exchanged reciprocal assurances of support with Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia.<sup>43</sup> In acknowledging the end of League resistance to the Ethiopian conquest, the British government announced that since the emergency had passed, it no longer considered these mutual assistance pacts effective.<sup>44</sup> The pacts nevertheless constitute an important precedent in case of future disturbance of the Mediterranean status quo, and the military conversations to which they gave rise may facilitate new arrangements when necessary.

39. France, Chambre des députés, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission des finances chargée d'examiner le projet de loi portant fixation du budget général de l'exercice 1937 (Marine militaire)* (Paris, Imprimerie de la chambre des députés, 1936), p. 45.

40. General Weygand, "La France en Méditerranée Orientale," *Revue des deux mondes*, April 1, 1937, pp. 515-36.

41. Laurent Eynac, "Le pétrole et la puissance: l'exemple français," *Revue Economique internationale* (Brussels), January 1937, pp. 70-77; George Slocombe, *The Dangerous Sea* (New York, Macmillan, 1937), pp. 55-58.

42. General Weygand, "La France en Méditerranée Orientale," cited, pp. 534, 535.

43. Vera Micheles Dean, "The Quest for Ethiopian Peace," *Foreign Policy Reports*, February 26, 1936, pp. 331, 332.

44. Statement of Anthony Eden, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 315, July 27, 1936, pp. 1122-23.

The period of extreme tension has been followed by strenuous British efforts to strengthen London's diplomatic position in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Ethiopian crisis brought home particularly the need for re-enforcing the British position in Cairo and the Suez Canal zone by an agreement with the Egyptian government. Since the World War Britain had had to contend with nationalist unrest in Egypt. British hegemony over the country and the Canal rested on an anomalous legal foundation.<sup>45</sup> The danger to British imperial interests at a critical moment was obvious. The Egyptians, for their part, had no desire to exchange a British for an Italian master and were convinced that the tense international situation offered an unprecedented opportunity for extracting concessions from Britain. Negotiations begun early in 1936—the seventh attempt to reach a settlement since 1920—were thus facilitated by fear of Italian aims and culminated in the signature on August 26, 1936 of a treaty of alliance clarifying Egypt's status.<sup>46</sup>

The new treaty bears a strong resemblance to the highly successful instrument under which Iraq received its independence in 1930. The military occupation is declared at an end; Britain recognizes Egypt as a "sovereign independent state" and will support its application for admission to the League.<sup>46a</sup> The foreign policy of both Britain and Egypt must conform to the alliance, under which mutual consultation is to take place during a serious dispute or "apprehended international emergency." In war, the two parties are to act as allies. In an emergency Egypt is to furnish all the assistance in its power, including the use of "ports, aerodromes and means of communication," while Britain may send re-enforcements to Egypt. Until it is agreed that Egypt itself can insure the security of the Suez Canal, Britain may station 10,000 troops and 400 airplane pilots, together with ancillary personnel, in specified areas in the Canal zone. After 20 years the treaty may be revised at the request of either party, but the basic principles of the alliance must remain in force.

The treaty, which is grounded on the hypothesis that defense of Egyptian territory is of vital interest for both parties, thus grants formal inde-

pendence to Egypt but substantially limits the country's sovereignty.<sup>47</sup> British troops are soon to be withdrawn from Cairo, where their presence has been a constant irritant, and from Alexandria within eight years. Egypt, however, will construct strategic roads, railways and air fields permitting mechanized British forces to reach all important areas on short notice.<sup>48</sup> The British position is still further strengthened by Egypt's agreement to convert its army, now of doubtful value, into a mechanized force of 20,000 trained by British advisers and using British-type armaments.<sup>49</sup> London has also won Egyptian military support in the Sudan for resistance to any attempt at interference with the water supply of the Nile.<sup>50</sup> If Egypt's political organization can weather the shock of greater internal autonomy and new financial burdens, Britain will have gained a most valuable ally, and Italian expectations of disaffection in Egypt during a crisis will have been disappointed.<sup>51</sup>

The effect of this blow on latent Italian designs affecting the Suez region was heightened by conclusion of a new convention regulating the régime of the Dardanelles, signed at Montreux on July 20, 1936, which altered the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean to Italy's distinct disadvantage.<sup>52</sup> This agreement was the outcome of a conference called by Turkey, which had seized the occasion of Hitler's successful repudiation of the Locarno treaties to press its own case against the provisions of the Lausanne Convention of 1923 demilitarizing the Dardanelles and placing them under international control.<sup>53</sup> While the Montreux convention generally reflected the desires of the U.S.S.R., France and the Balkan bloc, it was concluded only after an Anglo-Soviet clash had produced a temporary deadlock. Britain had demanded that, in case of a war in which Turkey is neutral, the British fleet should have the right to enter the Black Sea if the Soviet Union were permitted free transit for its Black Sea fleet. The U.S.S.R., on the other hand, had sought freedom of passage to

47. Cf. statement of Anthony Eden, Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 318, November 24, 1936, pp. 251-68.

48. Cf. annex to article 8 of treaty, Great Britain, Foreign Office, Treaty Series No. 6 (1937), Cmd. 5360, cited, pp. 6-10.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 19; *The Times*, February 12, March 13, 1937.

50. Georges Meyer, "L'accord anglo-égyptien," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, August 22, 1936, pp. 845-47.

51. "The Egyptian Treaty and After," *The Round Table*, December 1936, pp. 110-25.

52. Italy, citing the system of sanctions in force against it, did not attend the Montreux Conference or sign the convention, but may eventually adhere.

53. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, May 1936 (Geneva, 1936), pp. 504-505.

45. Cf. Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Great Britain and Egypt, 1914-1936* (New York, Oxford, 1936), pp. 38-45; Raymond Leslie Buell, "The Suez Canal and League Sanctions," *Geneva Special Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1935.

46. Ratifications exchanged December 22, 1936. For text, cf. Great Britain, Foreign Office, Treaty Series No. 6 (1937), *Treaty of Alliance between His Majesty, in respect of the United Kingdom, and His Majesty the King of Egypt*, Cmd. 5360 (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1937).

46a. Egypt became a member of the League on May 26, 1937.

meet its commitments under the League Covenant and mutual assistance pacts, but demanded security against incursions through the Dardanelles by non-Black Sea powers.<sup>54</sup> The British delegation—embarrassed by being forced to oppose at Montreux the principle of mutual assistance it had embraced at Geneva against Italy—finally yielded on this point.

In its final form the convention abolishes the international control of the Straits and permits their refortification by Turkey. Naval vessels of Black Sea powers may pass through the Straits with little restriction, but the aggregate fleet tonnage of non-riparian states in that sea is limited to 30,000—45,000 tons of light vessels. In time of war, when Turkey is not a belligerent, the Straits are open to belligerent naval vessels only when fulfilling League obligations and "in cases of assistance rendered to a state victim of aggression in virtue of a treaty of mutual assistance binding Turkey, concluded within the framework of the Covenant of the League of Nations." Under this provision Turkey, if it should adhere to the Franco-Soviet alliance, may serve as an important link between these powers and the Balkan bloc against a German-Italian offensive. When Turkey is a belligerent, moreover, or considers itself threatened with imminent danger of war, it may regulate the transit of warships through the Straits at its discretion. Under this clause, failing a reversal by a two-thirds majority of the League Council including a majority of the parties to the convention, the Turkish government may control the passage of war vessels at critical moments.<sup>55</sup>

Italy has been quick to realize that, as a result of this convention, it must take into consideration a new potential adversary in the East—the U.S.S.R.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet navy may now issue from its protected haven in the Black Sea in time of peace or during a League war against an aggressor. Turkey's full control over transit through the Straits during a crisis, moreover, may be exercised in favor of those powers with which Ankara has close relations.

54. For discussion of the broad implications of these positions, cf. Fernand de Visscher, "La nouvelle convention des détroits," *Revue de droit international et de législation comparée* (Brussels), vol. 17, 1936, no. 4, pp. 685-87; *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, July 10, 17, 1936; *The Economist* (London), July 18, 1936, p. 110; *ibid.*, July 25, 1936, p. 162.

55. Great Britain, Foreign Office, Turkey No. 1 (1936), *Convention regarding the Régime of the Straits with Correspondence relating thereto, Montreux, July 20, 1936*, Cmd. 5249 (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1936).

56. Santi Nava, "Il Mediterraneo orientale e l'Italia nell' ora presente," *Gerarchia*, November 1936, pp. 769-77.

#### CONDITIONAL FREEDOM FOR LEBANON AND SYRIA

Following the British example in Egypt and Iraq the French government has sought to strengthen its position in the Near East by making its peace with the Arab nationalist movement, through elevation of the French mandates in the Levant to the status of allied, nominally independent states. The French experience in these territories has been stormy. France has sometimes resorted to a policy of repression in its attempt to govern the congeries of religious and ethnic minorities under its control. The Lebanese Republic, a coastal strip extending from the Palestine border northward almost to the Turkish frontier, is largely Christian, while a number of Moslem sects inhabit the hinterland territory belonging to Syria.<sup>57</sup>

Attempts to reconcile French and Arabic interests were pressed to successful conclusion by the Blum government in treaties signed on September 9, 1936 with Syria and on November 13 with a Lebanese delegation. The Syrian treaty, which does not become effective until Syria's admission to the League three years after its ratification, provides for a 25-year alliance. Syria, like Egypt, will consult with its ally in an emergency and give French forces the use of all possible facilities. Responsibility for the maintenance of order and territorial defense rests on Syria, but French military aid will be at its disposal for the duration of the treaty. Until five years after the treaty goes into effect French troops will be maintained in two regions for protection of important minorities which are granted special administrative and financial régimes. Thereafter a French-trained Syrian army of specified strength using French armaments will be the sole land force. France may maintain two air bases in remote districts for the duration of the alliance. Minorities are guaranteed their rights under Syrian organic law and treaties concluded by the mandatory power.<sup>58</sup>

The alliance with the Lebanese Republic is of similar type but permits France to maintain land, sea and air forces on Lebanese territory.<sup>59</sup> As "an observation post with a view over the whole Near East" the country possesses great strategic im-

57. Georges Meyer, "Incidents politiques des traités franco-syrien et franco-libanais," *Revue politique et parlementaire* (Paris), January 1937, pp. 79-97.

58. For text of treaty, military convention, letters and protocols, cf. *L'Europe Nouvelle*, special supplement, November 28, 1936.

59. For text of treaty and supplementary exchanges, cf. *Oriente Moderno*, January 1937, pp. 15-22. Implementation of the military clauses appears to have begun on February 15, 1937. *Ibid.*, March 1937, pp. 134, 135.

portance. The potential naval base of Tripoli, a Lebanese port, is not only the terminus of the French pipeline but an economic outlet serving a large inland area.<sup>60</sup> Lebanese Christians welcomed the retention of French forces to protect the area from forcible assimilation by Syrian national extremists, and the treaty was in consequence quickly ratified by the Lebanese Chamber on November 17, 1936.<sup>61</sup>

These agreements have been received with approval in the Arab world.<sup>62</sup> It is still too soon to prophesy whether the difficult task of preparing the two territories for statehood in the next three years can be carried out in accord with the stipulated conditions. There is no doubt, however, that French influence has for the present been greatly strengthened in the Eastern Mediterranean, in the military as well as the political sense.

Conclusion of the Franco-Syrian treaty caused dissatisfaction in an unexpected quarter. Turkey, which had remained silent during the negotiations, protested at Geneva against the proposed change in the status of the Sanjak (district) of Alexandretta, the Syrian Republic's outlet to the Mediterranean on the Turkish border.<sup>63</sup> In a Franco-Turkish agreement of 1921 France had accorded the Sanjak a special administrative régime guaranteeing the cultural and linguistic rights of the Turkish population.<sup>64</sup> The Ankara government, arguing that in 1921 it had ceded the territory conditionally to France and not to the French government as mandatory power for Syria, contended that Alexandretta should become an independent state or a member of a confederation on an equal footing with Syria and Lebanon.<sup>65</sup> France insisted that the agreement of 1921 provided for an administrative but not a political entity. Acting with the Syrian government, it was willing to strengthen the general assurances of just treatment for minorities contained in the Franco-Syrian agreement but under the terms of its mandate was not free to alienate Syrian territory.<sup>66</sup>

60. General Weygand, "La France en Méditerranée Orientale," cited, pp. 515-36; *Oriente Moderno*, March 1937, pp. 135-36.

61. *Ibid.*, December 1936, p. 674.

62. Declaration of the Emir Arslan, *L'Europe Nouvelle*, special supplement, November 28, 1936, p. vii; *Oriente Moderno*, October 1936, pp. 553-55.

63. League of Nations, "Minutes of the Ninety-fifth (Extraordinary) Session of the Council, December 10-16, 1936," *Official Journal*, January 1937, p. 36.

64. Estimates of the number of Turks in the Sanjak vary from 39 to 80 per cent of the total population. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42; "XX," "La question d'Alexandrette," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, January 23, 1937, p. 88.

65. For a Turkish point of view, cf. *The New Statesman and Nation* (London), January 16, 1937, p. 70; for a Syrian view, *Journal des Nations*, February 18, 1937.

Behind this juridical dispute loomed the basic political conflict in the Mediterranean. The Turks, possibly with a view to extracting concessions while the French were engrossed with the Spanish situation, adopted an aggressive attitude and pushed matters toward a crisis.<sup>67</sup> Acceptance of Turkey's demands would have meant Turkish predominance in the district. Kemal Ataturk's government appears to have feared that France and Britain might at some future date permit Italy to occupy Alexandretta as part of a diplomatic bargain.<sup>68</sup> Paradoxically, Mussolini was suspected of encouraging Turkish maneuvers in order to embarrass France and Britain.<sup>69</sup> The German press displayed interest in the dispute, obviously believing alteration of the terms of a mandate would be a precedent of great possible value in connection with Germany's colonial claims.<sup>70</sup> France resisted severance of the Sanjak from Syria not only on this ground, but because it might lead to Arab discontent and possible uprisings in the Near East and North Africa—a prospect disagreeable to the British as well.

British mediation facilitated agreement on a provisional settlement under which Alexandretta is to have internal autonomy while its foreign affairs are conducted by Syria. No international convention or decision affecting the Sanjak's independence may be applied without the assent of the League Council. To assure respect for the Sanjak's status the Council will appoint a commissioner of French nationality, who may suspend legislation and refer it to the League. France and Turkey will guarantee the integrity of the district, which is to be demilitarized; the two powers, together with Syria, will insure the inviolability of the Turco-Syrian frontier.<sup>71</sup> A committee of six experts has been appointed to draft a statute and fundamental law for the Sanjak.

This settlement is open to criticism since it in-

66. Cf. text of Turkish white books and exchanges of notes, in League of Nations, *Official Journal*, January 1937, cited, pp. 36-55; also speeches of MM. Rustu Aras and Viénot, *ibid.*, pp. 22, 25-29.

67. "XX.X," "La question du Sandjak vue par l'opinion turque," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, January 9, 1937, pp. 41-43; *Le Temps*, January 9, 10, 1937.

68. *New York Times*, January 8, 1937, quoting Pertinax in *Echo de Paris*, January 7, 1937.

69. Cf. Pertinax, "Des entretiens Goering-Mussolini au discours de M. Eden," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, January 23, 1937, pp. 81-82.

70. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, January 15, 1937, p. 46.

71. The Council's decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority, exclusive of the parties to the dispute. For text of settlement, cf. League of Nations, "Minutes of the Ninety-sixth Session of the Council, January 21-27, 1937," *Official Journal*, February 1937, pp. 118-20.

volves the establishment of a complicated, League-supervised, autonomous régime at the very moment when the League's failure in Danzig has become apparent. Unrest is again rising on both sides of the border.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, as French Foreign Minister Yvon Delbos has stated, the "real significance" of the agreement is that "the understanding . . . will result in a stabilization of the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean; the political and territorial status quo is confirmed."<sup>73</sup> France retains authority along another section of the Levant littoral; Ankara resumes cordial relations with Paris; and discontent aroused among the natives by foreign propaganda is checked, at least temporarily.

#### ITALY'S MEDITERRANEAN DIPLOMACY

Italy's efforts to improve its diplomatic position in the Mediterranean have not led to successes comparable to those achieved by Britain and France. While Mussolini's aims have not been precisely formulated, they may constitute a direct challenge to the predominance of Britain and, to some degree, France in the territories controlled by these two nations on the Mediterranean-Red Sea littoral. At the same time, Rome must combat the influence of the Soviet Union in the Mediterranean, either at the Dardanelles or in Spain. It is to Italy's advantage, moreover, to agree on a division of spheres with Germany—Italy to concentrate on the middle sea, while Hitler receives a free hand in Central Europe and part of the Balkans. Mussolini also seeks to strengthen his diplomatic influence over such secondary powers as Spain, Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia and strives to profit from Arab discontent.<sup>74</sup>

Despite Mussolini's assertion that, with the conquest of Ethiopia, Italy has become a "satisfied" power, fear of Italy's Mediterranean ambitions plays an important part in the policy followed by Britain and France with respect to Spain. The naval security of these countries would be directly menaced by an Italian or German military establishment in the Western Mediterranean. An Italian base in the Balearics would be squarely astride French communications with North Africa, and would endanger British control exercised from Gibraltar.

72. *New York Times*, April 8, 17, 1937.

73. League of Nations, "Minutes of the Ninety-sixth Session of the Council," cited, p. 121.

74. Cf. Maurice Pernot, "La politique italienne dans la Méditerranée," *Politique Etrangère* (Paris), December 1936; Pertinax, "L'Italie puissance révolutionnaire en Méditerranée," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, April 17, 1937, pp. 371-72; cf. also P. Gentizon, *Le Temps*, April 21, 1937.

Should Germany control the Canary Islands, it could force a wide detour on the route to Cape-town. With bases in Spanish Morocco—at Ceuta, Melilla or Tetuan—or on the Spanish coast, the Fascist powers could cut all communications through nearby Atlantic waters and the Western half of the inland sea. Creation of a Right-wing, authoritarian Spanish government would sandwich France between Fascist frontiers.<sup>75</sup> Britain and France, to be sure, have made it clear that they do not intend to tolerate Fascist military establishments in Spanish Morocco or the Balearics. Both Germany and Italy have given assurances that they will not violate Spain's territorial integrity.<sup>76</sup> The possibility remains, nevertheless, that the Fascist dictators may secure an effective footing in Spain by asserting their influence over a puppet government they have helped to set up.

British and French distrust of Mussolini's aims appears to make a general settlement with Italy virtually impossible at present. This is indicated by the failure of an attempt to improve Anglo-Italian relations at the end of 1936. Mussolini's belligerent appeal for an accord, made at Milan on November 1, was the signal for conciliatory steps taken in Rome and London.<sup>77</sup> British officials hastened to grant *de facto* recognition of the Ethiopian conquest and to resume normal commercial relations with Italy. Yet the "gentlemen's agreement," finally concluded on January 2, 1937, was confined to vague generalities. Less formal than a treaty, it recognized that freedom of entry to, exit from and transit in the Mediterranean represents a vital interest for both parties; that their interests are not incompatible; and that neither has any desire to modify or, as far as they are concerned, to see modified the status quo as regards national sovereignty of territory in the Mediterranean area. In an accompanying exchange of letters dated December 31, 1936, Italy reaffirmed its pledge that "the integrity of the present territories of Spain shall in all circumstances remain intact and unmodified."<sup>78</sup>

The détente inaugurated by this accord was of brief duration. Its ambiguity led almost immediately to a conflict of interpretation. The Italians believed

75. Cf. "Intervention in Spain," *The Round Table*, March 1937, pp. 276ff.

76. For German assurances, cf. *Le Temps*, January 13, 1937, and *Völkischer Beobachter*, January 13, 1937; for an Italian statement, cf. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Fifth Series, vol. 318, December 16, 1936, pp. 2434-35; *Corriere della Sera*, December 17, 1936.

77. For text of speech, cf. *Gerarchia*, November 1936, pp. 743-48.

78. For texts, cf. *New York Times*, January 4, 1937.

they had maneuvered Britain into an anti-Communist position, since establishment of a Soviet Republic in Catalonia would constitute a disturbance of the status quo, while the British affirmed that the agreement prevented Mussolini from intervening anywhere in Spain to determine its form of government.<sup>79</sup> Strained relations between the two countries were aggravated by reports that Italian "volunteers" were continuing to arrive in Spain despite the non-intervention agreement,<sup>79a</sup> and by announcement of the British rearmament program, regarded as distinctly anti-Italian.

The basic conflict of British and Italian interests has been further illustrated by Mussolini's demonstrative bid for support from the Moslem world, strikingly exemplified during his tour of Libya in March 1937. Repeated charges are made in the British and French press that Italy is conducting or supporting Pan-Arab propaganda urging native populations to throw off the Western imperialist yoke.<sup>80</sup> The effect of Italy's efforts, however, is largely nullified by Arab suspicion of the designs of totalitarian states, which preach a doctrine of ruthless coordination of the areas over which they extend their sway.<sup>81</sup> While Italy has made indifferent progress in negotiations with the post-war Arabic states, Britain has steadily maintained its predominant position among them. Its alliances with Egypt and Iraq, linking their foreign policies with those of Britain, give London a strong incentive to promote the conclusion of interlocking treaties of alliance among the Arab nations.<sup>82</sup> To some extent British and Islamic aspirations have thus been reconciled.

Italy's diplomatic efforts in the Mediterranean have met with greater success in Yugoslavia and Turkey. These countries, free of Italian pressure now centered on Spain, have been quick to respond to Mussolini's protestation of respect for the status quo contained in the agreement with Britain.<sup>83</sup> Italo-Yugoslav relations in the Adriatic have

79. *Le Temps*, January 6, 1937; interview with Mussolini in *Völkischer Beobachter*, January 17, 1937; Anthony Eden, quoted in *The Times*, January 20, 1937.

79a. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, March 12, 1937, pp. 205, 211.

80. Note, for example, the well-documented reports of broadcasts in Arabic from the radio station at Bari, and Italian propaganda in Palestine. *The Times*, May 26, 1936; *New York Times*, June 4, 1936. Italian officials deny these charges.

81. Boveri, *Das Weltgeschehen am Mittelmeer*, cited, p. 202; quotations from Arab journals in *Oriente Moderno*, October 1936, p. 581; *New York Times*, March 28, 1937; *The Times*, April 1, 1937.

82. For consideration of this point in connection with the alliance between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, cf. *Le Temps*, February 16, 1937.

been notably improved by the treaties concluded at Belgrade on March 25, 1937. In these agreements each party agrees to respect the other's frontiers; Albania's present status is guaranteed; and Yugoslavia gains important commercial advantages.<sup>84</sup> Besides aiding Hitler in Central Europe by weakening the Little Entente, this rapprochement permits Italy to withdraw naval vessels from the Adriatic for use in the Mediterranean. Italy's general position has also been strengthened as a result of conversations between the Italian and Turkish foreign ministers, held at Milan on February 3, 1937, which appear to have decreased ill feeling between the two countries. Although the official communiqués issued on this occasion were significantly vague, it is believed progress was made in removing Italian objections to the Montreux Convention and Turkish fears of the Dodecanese fortifications.<sup>85</sup>

Despite these advances by Italy, Yugoslavia and Turkey have probably not become members of a Fascist bloc. Rearmament and mutual collaboration by France and Britain are believed by Balkan observers to be gradually tipping the scales against Mussolini and Hitler in Southeastern Europe.<sup>86</sup> Like other secondary states on the continent, both Yugoslavia and Turkey appear to be preserving a certain freedom of movement which enables them to play the great powers one against the other for their own economic and political advantage.

#### THE BALANCE OF FORCES

Since the Ethiopian crisis the general trend of diplomatic development in the Mediterranean area has been, on the whole, distinctly favorable to Britain and the status quo powers. Because these powers flinched before the necessity of threatening the ultimate sanction of force in Ethiopia and in Spain, the Fascist states have achieved appreciable successes. The accelerated pace of the world armament competition, however, indicates that the present clash in Mediterranean policies may some day lead to war. In such an eventuality where would the advantage lie?

In an Anglo-Italian conflict in which all other powers were neutral, the key factor in reaching

83. *Prager Presse*, February 6, 1937; *Le Temps*, February 6, 10, 1937.

84. For provisions of agreements, cf. *The Times*, March 27, 1937. Their implications for the Balkans will be discussed in a forthcoming issue of *Foreign Policy Reports*.

85. For text of communiqués, cf. *Le Temps*, February 5, 1937.

86. Cf. Gerhard Schacher, "Berlin and Rome in Central Europe," *Contemporary Review* (London), January 1937, p. 41.

a decision would be Mussolini's dictum that for England the Mediterranean is only a short cut, while for Italy it constitutes life itself.<sup>87</sup> Italy's geographic position, which is the basis of its strength, is also its principal weakness. Incontestably the poorest of the great European powers in natural resources,<sup>88</sup> Italy is peculiarly dependent for its subsistence on the Mediterranean Sea, through which comes 86 per cent of its total imports.<sup>89</sup> Seventy per cent of its supply of petroleum products alone is normally shipped via the Eastern Mediterranean,<sup>90</sup> and its own tanker tonnage is not sufficient to carry its imports.<sup>91</sup> Many Italian cities are situated on or near its immensely long coast line which, closely paralleled by its trunk railways, offers an easy target for attack. Italy thus fights under a crucial handicap, whether Britain chooses to blockade the Mediterranean at its entrance or to launch an offensive *à l'outrance*. As a result of its rearmament program, Britain will soon possess a greater margin of superiority on the sea and in the air, so that, other things being equal, it might be expected to triumph in the deadly, short-range opening offensives directed against nearby hostile bases.

But even if Italy were victorious in the Mediterranean, it could not strike at Britain's vital centers. Closure of the Suez sea route would throw a burden on the British shipping industry, but would not cripple the nation. Only 8.7 per cent of the foodstuffs and raw materials imported into the United Kingdom comes through the Suez Canal. Including commerce originating within the Mediterranean, Britain now depends on the middle sea for under 20 per cent of such imports.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, Britain can always make use of the detour around the Cape in an emergency.

Calculations based on a great war involving only these two nations, however, are likely to prove artificial. Under present conditions a European

conflict would almost certainly find France at the side of Britain, while Germany might possibly join Italy. In such a case, Britain and France would enjoy unquestioned superiority in navies and bases, together with at least parity in the air. The defensive organizations of the two nations are complementary to a notable degree. Britain's Home Fleet may command the Eastern Atlantic and the North Sea, while France concentrates its naval forces, including its formidable new cruiser, destroyer and submarine flotillas, in the Western Mediterranean. An attempt to keep the Mediterranean route open would rely heavily on the fortified French quadrilateral Toulon-Ajaccio(Corsica)-Algiers-Mers-el-Kebir, in the Western basin; and Bizerta may afford a refuge from the nearby Italian air bases which have rendered Malta precarious. In the Eastern Mediterranean the British are the stronger, but French troops in the Levant and development of the port of Tripoli may aid in the common effort. The defenses of the two powers on the coasts of Africa are complementary as well.<sup>93</sup>

It seems evident, therefore, that the odds are heavily weighted against the Fascist states. Unless they can win a war in Europe within a relatively short period—a contingency most military experts consider highly unlikely—Germany and Italy will be subjected to the pressure of Anglo-French sea power, which can still sweep enemy commerce from the outer oceans. Despite the drive for national self-sufficiency in the dictatorships, this factor may prove decisive in a long war.

The democratic states are in a position to utilize their strategic and diplomatic advantage to carry out a policy of firm resistance to Fascist ambitions. Such a course, it is believed, would be more successful in diminishing the likelihood of a European war than the policy of temporizing followed by the democracies in the Spanish conflict. A clear decision on this point by Britain and France would greatly contribute to the general political and economic settlement which they are now seeking to negotiate in Europe. If efforts to reach a comprehensive agreement are successful, it will be because Germany and Italy are convinced that they have more to gain by peaceful negotiation than by an adventurous diplomatic and military policy. Should a settlement prove impossible, however, Britain and France can ill afford to dissipate their advantages by retreating step by step before the offensives of Mussolini and Hitler.

87. Speech at Milan, November 1, 1936, *Gerarchia*, cited.

88. Cf. John C. deWilde, "Raw Materials in World Politics," *Foreign Policy Reports*, September 15, 1936.

89. Report of Biagio Páce to National Congress for the Study of Foreign Affairs (Milan), *Corriere della Sera*, October 16, 1936; and for a more revealing account, cf. *The Times*, October 17, 1936.

90. League of Nations, "Report of the Committee of Experts for the Technical Examination of the Conditions Governing the Trade in and Transport of Petroleum and its Derivatives, By-Products and Residues," *Official Journal, Special supplement No. 148* (Geneva, 1936), pp. 71, 80-83.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79. A tanker construction program has recently been begun. *New York Times*, January 25, 1937; *Commerce Reports*, February 27, 1937, p. 173.

92. Estimate of Hector Bywater, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), June 8, 1936.

93. Cf. René de la Bruyère, "Comment va l'Empire?" *Revue des deux mondes*, March 15, 1937, pp. 281-98.